

Collaborative of Guardians in the Early Intervention Program of Pre-School Hearing Students at The Special Education School

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Abstract: Collaboration is the most important aspect for special students, especially those with deaf and hard of hearing (DHH). This study was conducted aimed to explore the understanding and collaborative effectiveness of early intervention of DHH peoples from the guardians perspective. The design of this study uses a fully qualitative case study in the Johor Bahru Special Education School (JBSES). The interview method was used to obtain data involving three guardians pre-school students at JBSES. The theory used in this study is Bronfrenbrenner's Theory of Ecology. The model used is the Bronfrenbrenner ecological social model. The findings of the study indicate the extent of the effectiveness of collaboration in early intervention for DHH students where parents are understanding and participated in all activities in the school. Most of the parents contributed to the school activities. Other than that there is support from Non Governments Organisation (NGOs) and the outside parties to the school.

Keywords: early intervention; special students; special education schools

INTRODUCTION

Early intervention is a process of providing services, education and support for the students whom highly exposed of experiencing a deliberate progression whether in terms of physical or mental which will likely to hinder the development and restrict the learning process which meant to fulfill the student's needs as well as the family with special necessities in five developing aspects, which is physical development, cognitive, communication, social and emotional as well as an adaptation through various therapy or services, such as working method therapy, physio therapy, speech therapy and support services for the family. Early intervention services consist of various health treatment, habilitation, guidance and professional advices on dealing with the impacts of disabilities as soon as it is identified (Kail and Hall, 2001). In Malaysia, early intervention is provided to the special students starting from age of 0 until 6 years old. Referring to the Ministry of Education Malaysia (KPM), special students are divided into three categories, which is students with eyesight, hearing and learning process (Sandler, Brazdziunas, Cooley & De Pijem, 2001; Liew & Manisah, 2008).

Early intervention of DHH students plays a huge part in order to help lowering down the negative impact towards various development aspects which will be experienced by the hearing students. Wolfendale (1997) has listed down four main purpose of early intervention implementation which is early intervention provides support to the hearing student's family in order to allow them to be able supporting the hearing student's

development, enhancing the development of students from the same main stream such as communication and mobility, boosting the hearing student's confidence and avoiding problems in the near future.

There are four components in early intervention of DHH students which is language intervention component, the usage of teaching aid mechanism, social interaction skill and cochlear implant. Speech therapy is one of the interventions from language component where mainly been applied on initial stage to ensure the hearing students mastering the communication and need to be given as soon as possible because the intervention cost a lot of time and requires continuous practices. Speech therapy is a method to teach language to the DHH students and involving language speaking pathology which trains the DHH students empowering the speaking skill. Language intervention component exist in two forms of method which is oral and manual. Manual method is divided into two which is sign language and full communication.

The hearing aid usage is also part of the hearing student's early intervention. This mechanism is function to elevating the volume and assisting the DHH student listening to the sounds of language, though it would not be able to restore the hearing itself. Clark & Graeme (1999) shares the similar view where the usage of hearing aid are able to help some of the hearing students learn speaking if only the mechanism been used by the students at the early stage.

Apart from that, the component of interactive social skill is also considered as part of the DHH student's early intervention. This early intervention teaches the

hearing students socialize at the initial stage so that they capable to continue their lesson and live a life like other normal students. Next, an early intervention of cochlea implant which requires surgery for the hearing student. However, DHH student would need to fulfill criterion for cochlear implant before this early intervention can be chosen. The criterion that need to be fulfilled is that the hearing student must experience a terrible type of neural sensory hearing problem on both sides of ear, does not aged more than 4 years old (children whom had hearing problem since infant) and if the hearing aid usage incapable to help the DHH student in the aspect of language and speech.

As for the collaboration, it is defined as a pattern of direct connection between two groups that agrees to create mutual decision which is unlikely to be achieved by an individual or an organization (George & Stephen, 2002). Furthermore, collaboration in education is a cooperation between parties in diversity of expertise for the welfare of special students (the hearing students) in the near future. Collaboration is considered as part of interactive process among professionals in main education and special education, related services, the hearing student's family, and the cooperation of the DHH student in matter of fully assisting the development of the hearing student (Dettmer, Knackendoffel, and Thurston, 2013). This is because teamwork are the core for an effective early intervention to the hearing students and their family. One of the dimension in Special Education system in Malaysia are awareness and public contribution where KPM will find an initiatives to raise a public awareness regarding issues of special students and public involvement in education of special students (Plan of Educational Development Malaysia 2013-2025; 4-16).

The countries that receive a lot of positive feedbacks based on the parental support in Special Education program is United States of America. It is because the parent has reliable connection with hearing student and the parent are surely knows their children far better. Thus, it will be highly favorable if the teachers could get the parents involve in their children education (Masitah, 2010; Abidah, 2014). Their opinion is mainly parallel to the theory that has been introduced by Bronfenbrenner Ecology (1979). The concept that flows within the theory of Ecology stressed on the family context with factor of cultural background are factors that likely significant to the development of children. Parents whom depending on the intermediary environment of the children are the individuals that plays a crucial role which based on the intimate connection. Hence, parents are responsible as an intermediary between the professionals and

the children which respectively occur during the introduction, analyzation and early intervention.

Thus, this research is meant to focus on exploring the effectiveness collaboration of early intervention of the DHH students based on the perspective of the DHH student's parents. This study is also meant to observe the efficiency of collaboration in early intervention from the perspective of the parents because parents are in situation as an intermediary for the children and it plays an important role upon raising a family connection.

METHOD

Methodology of study are part of every steps that need to be taken to achieve regardless of research objectives (Ahmad, 1995). This study applied a qualitative approach which generate the design of case study that leads to the experience and opinion from the respondents. According to Moleong & Lexy (2007), qualitative approach is a research procedure that produce graphical data which can be perceived. While case study is an experimental reseach which been conducted upon certain system, whether in a shape of program or even an incident that related to place, time or certain connection (Kamarul, 2012). In order to gain the required data, researcher has interviewed three guardians to give out a point of view, opinion, and experience sharing through face-two-face. By implementing this method, the acquired information will be much solid and different based on individual personal experience. The interview approach is a method that hold high validity due to the reason of acquired data are directly based from research respondents (Hazlin & Safura, 2017).

Data analysis are been conducted using the thematic technique. Qualitative data analysis is an initiative that been done along with the data, advocate, divide it into sufficient units, synthesizing it, search of pattern, investigate any necessary elements and whatever that need to be taught as well as to thwart things that will be told to the others (Bogdan, Robert & Biklen, 1982). Analyzing process of research data has been initiated by copying all of the interviews in form of full text which is called as transcript. Following step is coding process where it is conducted to categorize each theme on the concerned table. Kamarul (2012) stated that each theme been given code as to simplify the research's work in labelling the concerned theme into the bigger ones. Based on the acquired themes, researcher can allocate the issues or pattern of the highlighted research questions. Both questions will be explained further details in the next section.

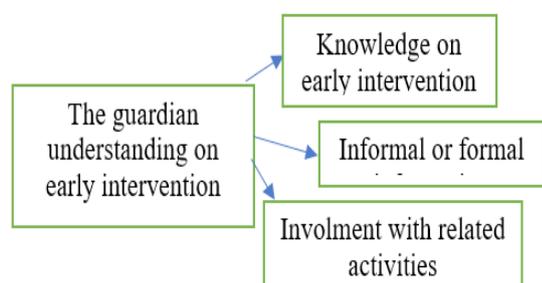


Figure 1. Level of guardian understanding on early intervention program.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

Research Respondents Profile

Researcher has interviewed three respondents whom are the guardian of the three pre-school students at JBSES. Respondent A is a 38-year old father and works in private sector in Pasir Gudang. The respondent B is a housewife and aged 29 year old while respondent C is a mother whom works as secretary at Iskandar Puteri City Council (MPIP) whom aged 32 years old. The conversation can only being done through telephone calls and depending on the right time of each respondents and the permission to record along the conversation has been given in order to save it as an evidence and translating them into a transcript later.

There are two types of hearing losses which has been identified which is losses of conduction hearing and losses of sensorineural hearing (Jabar & Ahmad, 2018). Based on the given sharing by the respondents, their children experienced losses of sensorineal hearing ever since childbirth as each of their hearing level at the worst level yet critical.

In matter of implementing this intervention program, the school shall specify to language and communication which is referring to sign language, cognitive and socio-emotional because based on the initial diagnosis that has been conducted by the school, these students have no problem in terms of course and delicate motor, behaviour and adaptive. Yusof, Hussain & Ahmed (2013) stated that most of the hearing students in Malaysia whom has capability of speaking are low yet some of them unable to speak at all or or has very minimum level of speaking. These three has been practiced by the teachers with hope that it would help the students while assist them as much as possible.

The term intervention itself gives off a different perspective definition among respondents due to the reason that they are never been informed either formally or informally regarding the name of the program which has been conducted for their children.

‘...I did not know about this intervention program because there is no clear information on any program been held at school...’ respondent A.

‘...As far as I know this intervention program is a program that has been conducted on every Saturday morning, where the teacher will teach sign language by using video calls and I am with my child following the session been held by the teacher...’ repondent B.

‘...I have been informed that there are several program been conducted at the early year of 2020 where the teacher will make few consildation practices relating to the sign language since my child unable to learn sign language formally before he could enter to school...’ respondent C.

This early intervention program has been held by the school in order to provide assistance to the parent in matters of taking certain steps so that an early detection and treatment can be done and decreasing critical chances of inability, problem and disability that has been dealt by the special individuals. According to the conducted interviews, every respondent are truly aware on the intervention program which has been held by the school, though some of them are confused by the formal term that has been referred to the intervention due to the reason of getting used to the term called rehabilitation or consolidation.

In order to identify the next level of understanding, the researcher has observed on both direct and indirect involvement of each respondents in the intervention program which has been held by the school. Apparently the respondents has give a cooperation yet directly involve in the intervention program that has been held such as providing assistance based from the medium of preparation of intervention program during the teacher’s teaching process through video calls with their children. Moreover, the respondents have learnt a lot while they are with their children.

‘...Normally my wife will supervise the session together with Teacher Shamsiah by using the video calls because I am working during that time. According to my wife, the lesson has been done smoothly and my child are excited with the technique since he often play computer games...’ Respondent A.

‘... It is hard for me for the first time because the internet line are not stable around my area. The school could only have two to three months only, therefore, most of the lesson are been done through phones. So I have decided to take it to my mother’s house in Kampung Pasir, the internet line there are rather good. It is only for starter, after the coverage of phone number been changed to another, the lesson begins at my house once again...’ respondent B.

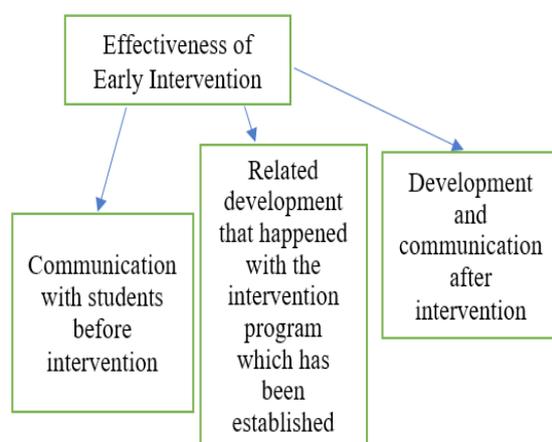


Figure 2. Opinions about the success of the early intervention program.

“... While my child goes to school as usual, I found myself having no trouble with the learning lesson except when the schools are in months or so, there is a restriction for me because I work in the morning and came home in the evening. I only able to join on weekend. Thus, after discussing with the teacher, they will give exercise sheets and videos to my phone everyday. And I have request the video calls been made on weekend for my child to learn directly from the teacher...” Respondent C.

The effectiveness of Early Intervention Program in JBSES from perspective of guardian.

These three questions questions has been combined by observing the effectiveness of the intervention based off the guardian perspective along with their children at home. In addition, with current situation where learning can only be conducted through online platform.

“... Even I myself does not know these sign language. I do watch it in the television but I do not understand. Because by the time I realize my child is deaf, I have no idea where to refer to because I have been busy with work. When I’ve learn from friends that there is a special school for deaf students, I decided to send my child to JBSES. We used to use a simple language at home, for example, when he wants to eat or a stuff, he would point to the concerned items. As for the real sign language, I am afraid there is none...But after several months in JBSES I could see that my child develop changes in terms of study. Back in the days he used to play with gadgets but when the school starts, he has started to do homework such as colouring, tracing the alphabet’s points...” Respondent A.

From this point of view, we can see that early intervention are genuinely crucial because the more delay in the years the student acquired intervention, the more likely the benefits and communication that should be received by the students delayed.

Based on the result of this study, researcher are also able to learn that the guardian has an initiative for independent learning at home before these students catching up to the school’s lesson. In other words, parents are responsible as connector between the therapists, teacher and organization body with the children especially during the identification, translation and early intervention (Abidah, 2014). Perhaps due to the differences in approach has made the student to be less interested to the guardian’s method itself. The student too know the differentiation between the guardian and the teacher that taught them. On different perspective, the student knows that the guardian are only available for them when at home and taught them the way they used to do at home while the teacher are at school and teaching them with new things yet this can be differentiated by the students itself based on the result from respondent B.

“... There is cleaner at my workplace whom is a deaf person. But I myself never try to communicate with her. Because, to me, my son is still small so I feel like he will learn it at school. Therefore, I do not need to learn it at the early years. However, after the discussion session with the teachers during the early year pre-registration, I realized that it was my son whom need the early exposure. I have overlook that they, too, have emotions and expression that they wish to express. Without sign language, they would not be able to state their desire clearly. I mainly exposed him to television and gadgets before this. After seeing him school, I could see that a he is less likely to throw rampage compared to back in the days. Although at first he seems fatigued after went back from school but now he at least likes to see books that been brought from school...” Respondent C.

This issue is often arised due to the need of awareness among parents in the early stage of students so that they are able to receive a suitable language which fits for them as soon as possible because the impact may drives an influence to their whole life. This can be seen that there are lack of promotion or exposure which need to be distributed by the KPM whether at regional level or district level in matter to ensure more people would know the existence of these centres or schools that can provide them services for these hearing students.

Contribution and Support for Early Intervention Program at JBSES

In order to establish an effective program for these students, a contribution and support among concerned parties are genuinely required such as collaboration between professionals and parents. An effective collaboration are exist if every related parties practicing an open-minded attitude and has similar objectives, which is maximising potential and minimizing disability of autistic children along the route of collaboration.

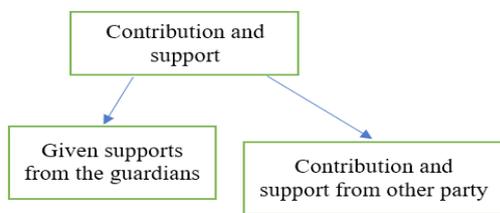


Figure 3. Contribution and support of early intervention program.

On top of that, “education is for all” which has been introduced should always be reminded in a way of initiatives towards providing services for the hearing students. This is meant in order for the rights to obtain education or services equally distributed, especially in an environment of new norm nowadays.

“...As far I remember, the first program on Saturday that the school has invited us family together following the sign language program at the school hall. From morning to noon. It was a good program, plus, it was my first experience learning sign language together with my child. The program was held for free along with participation of the teachers and a served feast. I even did not expect that such good program been conducted by the school. Although it was not for long until the Restriction of Movement Order took place, schools have to be closed down and we only communicate through the phone later on...” Respondent A.

The school has held the program from zero to hero by inviting Parents and Teachers Organization (PIBG) in order to work together in establishing a program which will be held in the school hall on every Saturday. One of the sharing content is sign language class for the students and family so that this language can be applied and understood not only in school but also at home. Numerous parties has shown encouragements such as guardians, the student’s siblings, teachers, the parents society and also NGO which has contributed to the program of concerned school.

“...during the weekly sign language class, I have been approached by several people wearing blue shirts and introduced themselves as KSIB (parental support group) specifically for parents that has hearing children. I am so grateful at that time because all these while I thought my husband and I are the only that had a son with hearing disability but apparently there was community of parents whom had similar scenario that form a support group in order to give motivation in educating these special children...” Respondent B.

The JBSES Parental Support Group (KSIB) are established by the parents itself in matter of attracting those who has children that studies in JBSES whether they are currently attending or already went into high school. This group has gave a huge help in terms of

distributing crucial informations regarding Special Education outside school and became a main contributor to every program which has been held by school.

“...I received calls from an officer at my workplace which is Iskandar Puteri Municipal Council regarding the fact that I have a hearing child whom currently went to school in JBSES.

“... I have been contacted by the administrator at my place of work, the Iskandar Puteri Municipal Council, regarding I have a hearing child who is attending school in JBSES. I am feeling thankful for the officer’s concern whom aware of the fact that I was having a difficulties at times in matter of taking care of children and had to take leave. The MPIP were pleased to consider JBSES as their adoptive school by contributing herbal garden landscape to be built in the school specially for the students of the concerned school. I am grateful that these matters happened and I could see the other parties’ concern for the children of hearing disability like my son...”

These contributions are somehow indirect brings a new chapter to JBSES in matters of creating awareness among the public regarding institutions that can give them facilities as well as inclusive education yet an excellent choice for these hearing students.

Discussion

The intervention program that been held in school are indeed interesting and attracted a lot of parties whom took part in making it successful, however, there are still few groups especially from other teachers involvement who never had experience in teaching pre-school and this might leads to troubles for the only teacher that taught pre-school and been accompanied by only one student assistant.

From the perspective of information delivery, it seems that the mother has obtain more information compared to the father. Thus, it will be beneficial if the teachers could attract the involvement of parents in their children’s education (Masitah, 2010; Abidah, 2014). Based on this references, supposedly the involvement does not bias on one side only but in terms of collective and mostly target on those who are close to the students as to ensure that there would not be any hindrance during the running process of intervention. As aforementioned on nowadays, a lot of parents with career and working due to life demand and living cost which continuously increasing. As the result, parents are likely occupied with work especially fathers whom mainly prioritizing the career in which likely giving influence to the society’s economic status (Shahrul, Norzaini & Manisah, 2008). These are part of the reason why some issues arised among fathers whom less likely aware on their children’s development.

Even so, for the program that been held on every weekend which is sign language classes, the

involvement are highly encouraging among the parents which is the first two months before the Restriction of Movement Order (MCO). Supported by the study which shows that there are parents whom wish to learn ways to assist their children and allowing them knowing the teacher's method of care, the content and the performance of child development (Liew & Manisah, 2008).

The program's challenges are truly affected when the Restriction of Movement Order (MCO) been initiated at the Johor Bahru region. This causes every learning activities shall implement online platform only compared to before this (mixed method). Some parents are ready to help their children, however, they are unable to give solution for each problem of their child's development (Kyarkanaye, T., Dada, & Samuels, 2017). The real situation is when the parents need some practice and assistance from the experts as together implementing the early intervention towards these special children. It can be seen that the importance of collaboration in the early intervention of special children, specifically, the hearing students.

Based on the content of Individual Teaching Plan (ITP), these three students has not achieving the targeted objectives yet, along with the optimum control which caused by the aforementioned hindrances. Nevertheless, the role of parents are certainly gave huge supports and excitement with the program that been held due to the fact that it was their first time learning the sign language. Parents and Teachers Society (PIBG) of schools and Parental Support Group (KSIB) had given supports by contributing in terms of financial for the programs such as sign language class. (certificates, snacks, and consolation prize for the concerned teachers). One of the dimension in the system of Special Education in Malaysia is the awareness and public engagement where KPM will find an initiatives to provide a public awareness regarding issues that relating to the needs of special students and the engagement of the public in education of special students (Education Development Plan Malaysia 2013-2025;4-16).

As a whole, based on this study, it can be analysed that the engagement of all parties especially parents and guardian in the early intervention of hearing students give a tremendous impact to the students with hearing problem. Hoping that all of the involved parties in the early intervention program can become collaborative for the hearing students because these group are also deserve an equal treatment as much as other students. Hopefully that the result of this study are able to explain on the need of collaboration with all the supportive service societies towards the hearing students in matters of elevating accessibility as well as quality of education for the hearing students. This collaboration are essential especially in aspect of of

detection and requirement of early intervention that is suitable to be applied to the hearing students according to the level of hearing losses. Hence, the party whom responsible for amendment of the special children curriculum, specifically, the hearing students in order to enable planning a relevant curriculum as well as comprehensive as to achive KPM's vision which is education for everyone.

CONCLUSION

Collaboration in the early intervention plays a crucial role which is very important for the hearing children, especially at the age between 0 until 6 years old. The research result had reveal that transformation had been shown by the hearing students after the early intervention been conducted regardless of the level of intervention. Nevertheless, this study has found that the early intervention which has been received although on its strategic basis and systematic but still need to have improvement equivalent to the recent new norms.

To create an effective program for these hearing students, apparently the collaboration of all parties involved are genuinely required such as collaboration between the schools, parents, NGO and government bodies. An efficient collaboration can be created if all involved party practicing a broad mindset yet possess similar objectives, which is maximizing potential and minimizing incapacibilities of the hearing students along the process of collaboration. In addition, "education meant for all" which it has been introduced must always be kept in mind in a way of preparing services for the special children, including the early intervention for the hearing students. These are meant for achiving rights to gain opportunity of education or services equally, especially in a natural environment.

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